ForesTalk

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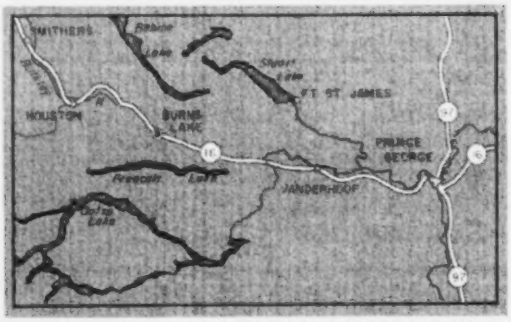

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COVER: *Lavina lookout tower at the north end of Kootenay Lake.*

ForesTalk WINTER 1974

THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF LANDS
FORESTS AND WATER RESOURCES
THE HONOURABLE ROBERT WILLIAMS
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Policy Statement
The objective of the British Columbia Forest Service, as the forest administrative agency for the government of British Columbia, is to develop and enforce policies which will ensure for all time the proper balance of timber supply, forage production, forest recreation, wildlife protection and environmental preservation on the Crown forest lands of the province.

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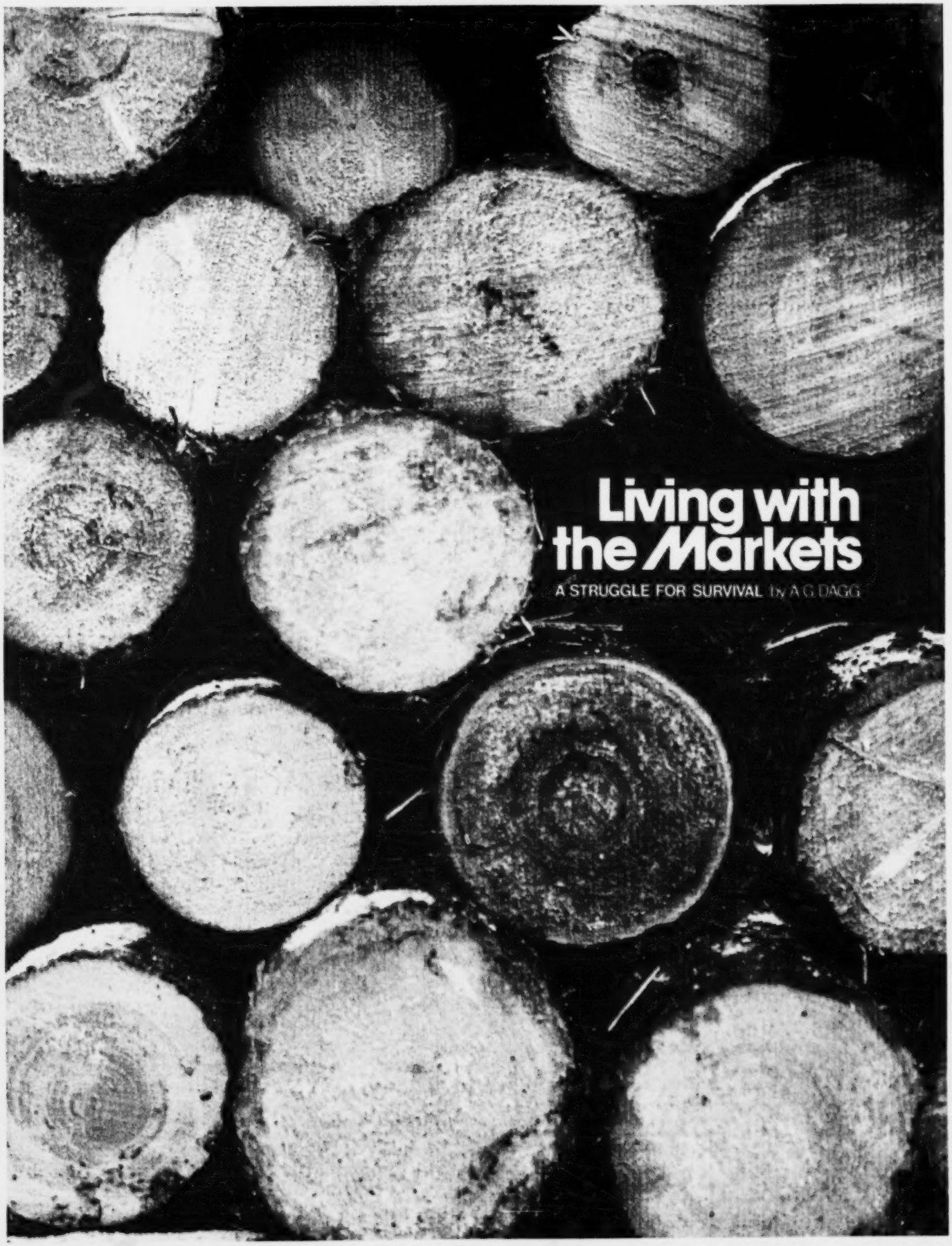

Living with
the Markets
A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL by A G. DAGG

Wood chips have become the virtual life blood of many independent sawmills in British Columbia. For some, chips are the difference between complete closure and a bare survival during the current sour lumber market.

For others, revenue from chips has not been enough to sustain their operation on even a minimal basis so they have become casualties of a set of circumstances beyond their control.

The obvious question is: How can that portion of the provincial timber harvest, which until a few short years ago was either left on the forest floor to rot or burned as sawmill waste, now be so vital?

During times of good lumber markets and under current logging regulations requiring practically full utilization of all trees cut, about 75 percent of the B.C. timber harvest is converted to lumber.

Most of the remainder goes to pulp mills either as logs or as chips produced from lumber mill residues. In fact, pulp mills have turned increasingly to residual chips as their source of wood fibre and some are designed to use nothing else.

Most pulp mills are owned by companies or corporations which also own several sawmills, planer mills and perhaps one or more plywood or veneer plants. These facilities all produce chips or shavings and sawdust. So a goodly portion of the raw material required by each pulp mill usually comes from within the integrated complex of which it is a part.

Nevertheless, few if any of these corporations are self sufficient in this regard and most of them have long term contracts with several independent or non-integrated sawmills to buy all the chips they produce. A sustained supply is most important.

In 1970-72 after a number of new pulp and paper mills came into operation, capacity exceeded demand by a considerable margin, markets were poor and prices low. Most of these mills were losing money, some heavily. At the same time, lumber markets were good, production was high and prices attractive.

As chip production in sawmills is normally directly related to lumber output, there were vast supplies of chips and it was not uncommon to see several enormous piles of them in each pulp mill compound. They do not retain their best pulping qualities for any prolonged period so some pulp mill authorities found it necessary to dispose of excesses by export or other means.

Now, the entire situation has changed. Lumber sales have fallen drastically in the past year. So too have lumber prices. Some sawmills have cut back from two or three shifts to one. Others now operate only three or four days each week. Still others, not all non-integrated, have closed down for an indefinite period. With this great reduction in lumber output, chip production as a by-product of lumber manufacturing has been similarly curtailed.

This is particularly significant as demand for pulp and paper has now caught up with mill capacity and prices have about doubled in the past two years. The mills are humming but chip supplies on which most of them depend are perilously low. Few have stockpiles for more than two weeks and if more lumber mills shut down, the already serious situation will worsen.

As a means of generating revenue and to avoid greater staff layoffs or even complete closure, many sawmills are now making only the best grades of lumber and chipping the logs which would be converted to the lower grades in times of good markets. Some are even chipping their

stockpiles of low grade lumber. Therefore, some mills which are still operating are producing more chips than they normally do and the pulp mills are glad to have them.

But despite a ready market for all the chips produced, most independent sawmill operators feel strongly that they need some immediate and genuine help to weather the crisis and a better price for chips is one of their proposals.

Chip prices vary considerably throughout the province. In early October they ranged from $13 to $20 per unit in the Southern Interior and $20 to $23 in the Central Interior to $35 to $45 on the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. These were the prices paid for good quality chips to the producer at his mill, with transportation costs an added expense for the buyers.

For example, in early October one large integrated company was buying chips from several Southern Interior lumber mills for $19 to $20 per unit but the ultimate cost was about double that after they were shipped to a pulp mill on Vancouver Island.

Variations between Interior and Coastal prices are even more than they first appear. The unit of measurement in the Interior (Bone Dry Unit) is about 20 percent greater than the one employed on the Coast (Volumetric Unit).

When challenged regarding the lower chip prices paid in the Interior, pulp mill representatives of that region offer an imposing array of answers. They point out that most Interior pulp mills were built during the past 10 years when construction costs were particularly high. They were induced to build by the government of the time with an assurance of an ample supply of wood at low cost.

In addition, they emphasize the transportation costs for moving pulping chemicals to the mills and the pulp itself to the ocean terminals. They stress the problems of interior winter weather, the higher rate of staff turnover and recruiting problems. Perhaps the point they make most emphatically is that after many years of poor pulp markets and deficit operations, it is only in the past year or two that they have shown their first profits.

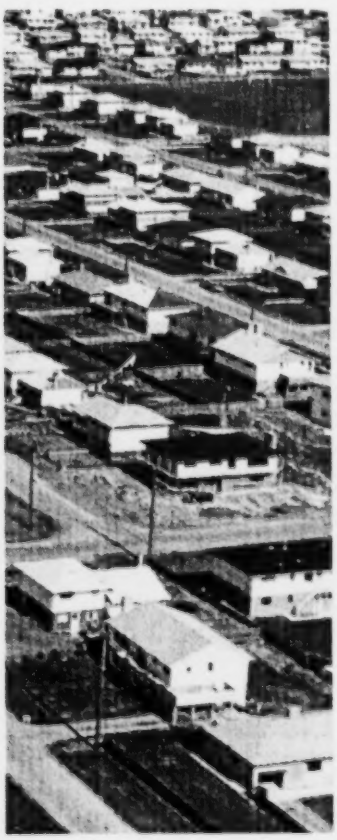
Even on the coast, independent lumber mills complain of inadequate return for their chips from B.C. buyers. To support their contention, they point out that American pulp mills in Washington State are paying $50 to $60 per unit plus transportation and tax for B.C. chips. That is $15 to $20 more than they can get from local buyers.

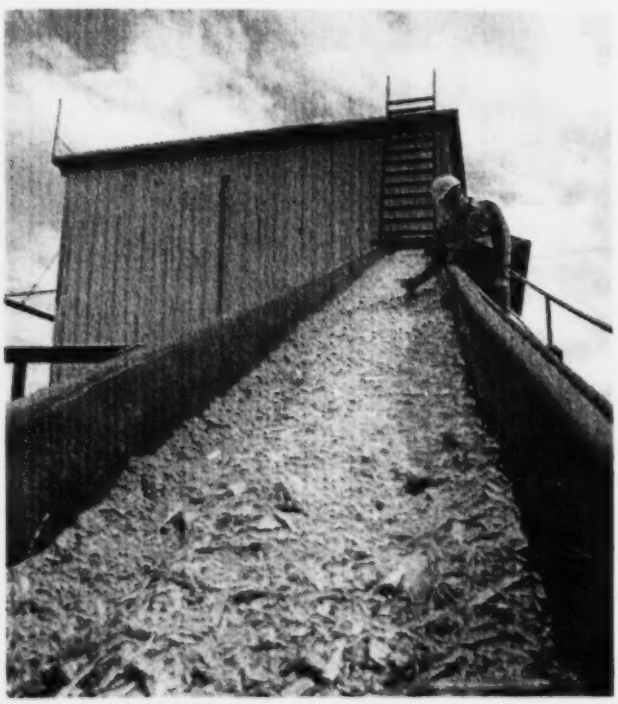
In late October, there were 10 government-approved chip export permits out-standing and of these, nine were to mills located in the Coastal region. All permit holders were exporting to the U.S.A. and one of them stated firmly that if his permit is cancelled and he is obliged to sell to local buyers at current prices, he will be compelled to close down completely and lay off his entire staff.

Most B.C. pulp mills have introduced an escalation clause to their chip buying contracts. As the selling prices for their products go up, so too does the price of chips. In the Central Interior, suppliers now receive $20 to $23 per unit against the basic price of $10.50 about two years ago. On the Coast there have been several increases, the most recent being on October 1st when $5 to $8 were added to unit prices.

Of course everyone agrees that the fundamental problem is a world-wide slump in the lumber market and even the optimists see little sign of improvement in it until mid-1975 at the best.

Such market fluctuations are not new but with each dip in the cycle, a number of lumber mills, usually the





For most companies in the B.C. lumber industry, chip production has become a means to survival, during the current housing slump.

smaller independents, are unable to continue. Some amalgamate with others, some sell out to integrated companies and others simply salvage what they can and close up.

In 1961 there were 1,417 sawmills operating in B.C. At the end of 1973 there were 810. By now, several of those will have fallen out.

The most vital issue, as Resources Minister Robert Williams sees it, is the survival of these independent operators. The integrated companies, through mutual support of their various components, should be able to weather the blow, he feels. But how can he rescue the more vulnerable independents?

Of the dozen or more representatives of both independent and integrated companies interviewed in October all had a number of suggestions which they believed would help the forest industry as a whole. All would like to see a number of changes in stumpage regulations which determine the amount paid to the government for timber removed from Crown lands.

Some feel there should be no charge for wood converted to chips. Some appeal for a deferment in payments until the lumber or other product is sold. Others are critical of the diligence with which Forest Service personnel enforce logging and environmental guidelines, particularly in these times of economic hardship.

Spokesmen for most independents seek better prices for their chips from pulp mills and ask that any increase be exempt from stumpage payments. Pulp mill representatives contend that more money for chips will not solve the problem. It, they say, is of such a magnitude that only in the return of a buoyant lumber market will there be a cure.

In June 1974, a group of Interior independent lumber manufacturers submitted a brief regarding chip supply and price problems to the B.C. Government's Task Force on Crown Timber Disposal. It stated, "Since chip supply is basic to the efficient operation of pulp mills, chips should be considered more as a primary product rather than as a by-product of lumber. Chip production, supply and pricing must be given due recognition as a dominant phase in the conversion of fibre."

Some coastal independents propose a "chip marketing board" which would include representatives of chip producers, chip consumers and the provincial government. Its objectives would be to ensure an adequate supply of chips for the pulp mills, to ensure efficient and effective distribution of all chips and to ensure a fair and equitable price for chips to both producer and consumer.

Many other suggestions have been made to the government. By the time this article is read, some action may have been taken to help the independents. But solution will not be simple.

When this article was written, the Timber Products Stabilization Act had just been introduced in the B.C. Legislature by the Resources Minister. It and when approved, it will empower cabinet to set prices at which wood chips shall be sold in different parts of the province.

An independent analysis of the situation indicates that Interior pulp mills can afford to pay more for their chips and the Minister suggests that, given the powers, a substantial increase in prices may be imposed.

Editor

Reforestation Interview

Reforestation and tree planting are synonymous in the minds of many. Other interpretations vary according to experience. It could mean one thing to a city dweller on the lower mainland, and something else to an individual living in the interior. The weekend recreationist might see a bare patch in the forest as he drives by on the highway. In many cases, close observation would show healthy regrowth actually taking place. On the other hand, many people come across areas of heavily wooded forests and think that reforestation is sufficient, where in reality, this forest is classified as unsatisfactory. Some of the principals of reforestation are discussed in the following conversation between Ron Tarves, long time C.B.C. commentator, and representatives from the Forest Service Reforestation Division. Ron's questions are geared to areas most questioned by the public.

Reforestation Interview

R.T. *The 1970 Forest Inventory Statistics show 8.4 million acres of forest land as not being satisfactorily restocked. Can you explain this?*
F.S. More than three million acres of this total are in the far north. In that area, the harvesting operation is minimal because of low productivity. Much of this area, classified as being not satisfactorily restocked, is the result of large fires that were allowed to burn themselves out. This area is regrowing naturally, which is a slow process. The total figure also includes Provincial Parks, Federal lands and an additional 1.3 million acres not expected to be managed for harvest. Therefore, we can reduce the total figure more realistically to about 3.9 million acres.

Also, through improved technology, we are now able to carry out more intensive surveys in many of the areas of the Province. Previous surveys indicating large areas as unsatisfactorily restocked, have now been revised and show 30 to 50 percent are now sufficiently restocking naturally. What we are now looking at is nearly two-and-a-half million acres of productive forest land not yet supporting a productive timber crop.

R.T. *What proportion of these lands can we afford to rehabilitate?*
F.S. As part of our survey procedure, we classify lands to determine how much can be replanted and how much more will have to be left to the slower natural process. There is no question — we should be prepared to make the necessary investment. The cost would be in the range of $50 to $70 per acre.

R.T. *Is the current reforestation program, together with natural regeneration, sufficient to maintain our forests at our present and our projected future rate of use?*
F.S. Yes. Our method of reforestation is one of priorities. The first priority is to plant highly productive forest lands immediately after logging or burning. This ensures that the proper species at the right spacing will grow in these areas to maintain proper production. Otherwise the land would brush in quickly and complicate the situation. Our second priority is to plant less productive lands which experience tells us will restock naturally over an extended time. Our third priority is to replant areas left to restock naturally in the past but have not regenerated according to earlier predictions.

There are two aspects of reforestation we feel many people do not fully understand. One, a logging operation can be conducted so the new crop will develop naturally as a result of the cutting method. The second point is that a large part of lands burned by forest fires will restock naturally within a short time. Many people complain they have seen bare patches (or clear cuts) from the highway. Closer examination would show healthy regeneration taking place.

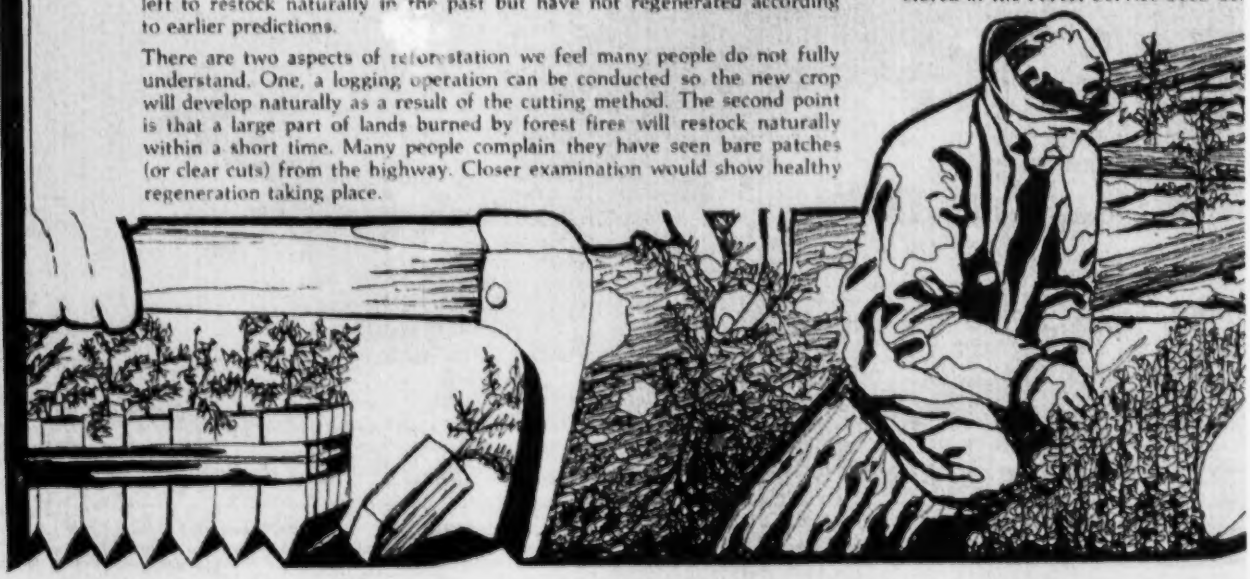
R.T. *Where are your forest nurseries loc their capacity?*
F.S. We have nurseries at Campbe Island; Green Timbers, Surrey and lower mainland. In the northern int south of Prince George, and anoth southern interior, we are located at Vernon.

Together, they have a capacity of 1

R.T. *The first major planting program too over land was replanted in the Sayward are these trees now?*
F.S. They range in diameter from 5 are very heavily stocked with up to soon be ready for commercial thinnin

R.T. *Would you recommend a visit to the understanding of what reforestation is all ab*
F.W. Yes. If more people would visit be a better understanding of reforest forest use. The Sayward is now a ma road system maintained by the For good fishing and some have picnic sit

R.T. *What kind of seed supply must yo and how do you collect the seeds?*
F.S. Since the forest yields only inter of acquiring and maintaining a 10- Cones are collected from the forest specifically for the job. We then se large tumbler. The seed is tested an moisture and light-proof containe stored at the Forest Service Seed Ce



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Forest on Vancouver Island — how large

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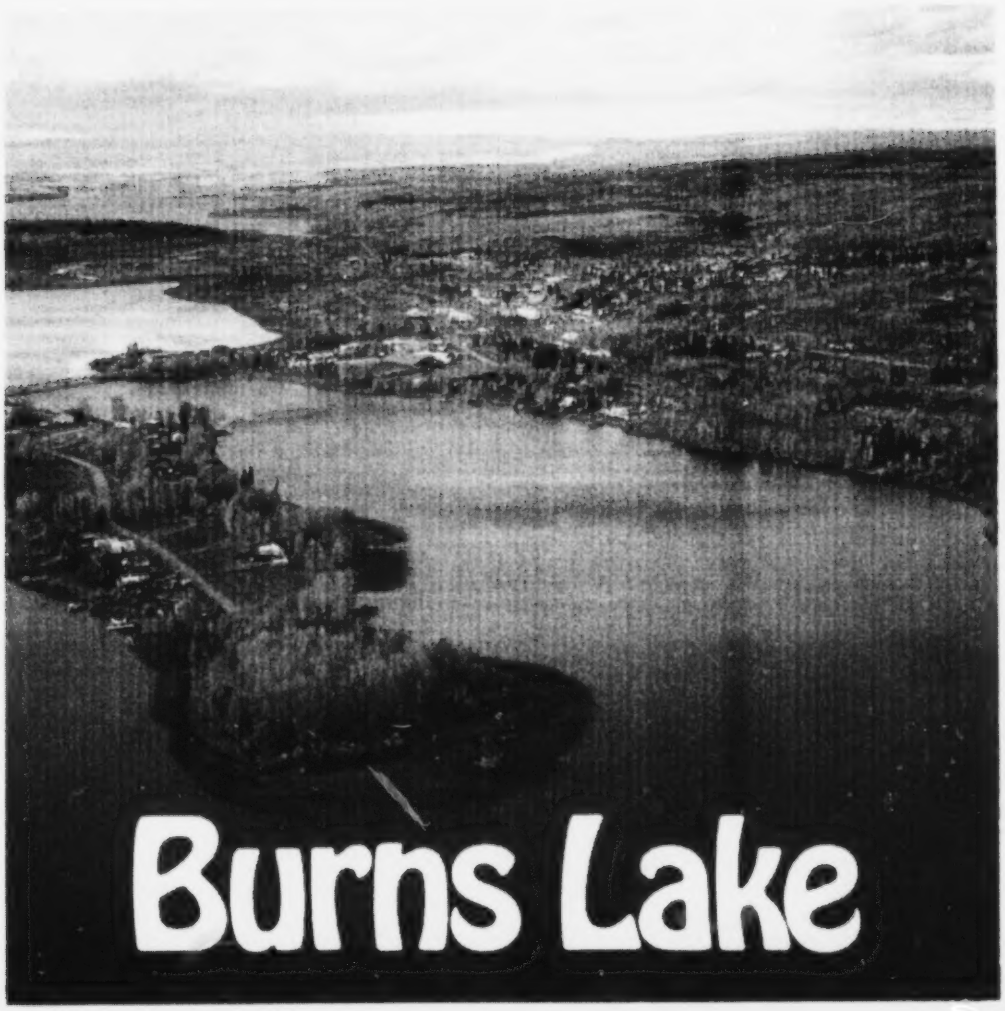
year supply of seed for all species.
s each fall by crews of people hired
arate the seeds from the cones in a
d stored under freezing conditions in
s until needed. The containers are
tre in Duncan.

R.T. *What emphasis do you place on superior tree breeding in your program?*
F.S. We supervise cone collecting to ensure the cones are taken only from trees with superior characteristics. At the same time, we have initiated a new program to establish seed production orchards allowing us to grow seed from selected trees as a crop.

R.T. *Have foresters made any significant use of cross-breeding as plant and animal producers have done?*
F.S. Yes. In B.C. we have programs underway to produce high grades of Douglas fir, hemlock, spruce and Lodgepole pine. The program requires a great degree of input and involves our Research Division, The Canadian Forestry Service and several of the larger companies on the coast.

R.T. *If you could forget for one moment that you are a public servant and money was no object, what would you like to see happen with reforestation?*
F.S. It is difficult to imagine being in a situation where money would be no object. We would like to see some recognition by government and the public that it costs money to run the forestry business and a part of the income from the sale of a crop is capital which should be reinvested. In British Columbia we are seriously committed to sustained yield (the policy of balancing forest losses with growth) and it is not rational that we have to make a major case each year to recover part of the income from the harvest for our programs. Reforestation is an expensive proposition and we would like to see the annual commitment bear some relationship to the income.

The late Dr. George Allan of U.B.C. made the point in 1948, that this lack of commitment to fund sustained yield was the biggest weakness in the forestry program in British Columbia. We are closer now than ever before, but we have a long way to go.



Burns Lake

by **G. Graham**

Nestled in an area of high ridges and rolling countryside, trees and lakes as far as one can see, Burns Lake is much like a village or town found anywhere in Canada. On the surface, that is. There is something special here. Something that sets Burns Lake apart from the ordinary.

The difference is the future.

Instead of waiting for some developer to find Burns Lake and conform the village to its economic needs, without any concern for the people and the environment, the reverse is happening. This reversal is called 'New Dimensions'.

Burns Lake has never had a permanent major industry and consequently, the people work in diverse areas and industries. Some commute as far away as 100 miles. Others don't work at all.

Another part of the make-up here is the native population. Native people make up one-third of the area's population and 75 percent are unemployed. Many who have basic training move to other areas in search of work.

Until a year and a half ago, the situation was a great source of worry to many people. But at that time, programs were initiated by many levels of government to deal with the situation. Thanks to these efforts, Burns Lake is moving in the right direction.

Since then, Robert Williams, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources for British Columbia, has worked with Mayor Baker and people of the village, every step of the way, to ensure the success of 'New Dimensions'.

Today, as a result, a new $14 million sawmill is under construction. It will be in operation by September 1975. The name of the company is Babine Forest Products. Of course, with a little push, any community can attract industry of some kind, regardless of consequences, but Babine is designed to involve the community.

George Richards, resident manager, feels Burns Lake is a perfect location for a mill, because of its proximity to timber and enthusiasm of the residents. "Our aim is to make money. We can't forget this point. In turn, the mill will greatly improve the economic base of Burns Lake."

What of the environmental impact? At the mill, smokeless burners will be used as well as its own water supply.

Babine is committed to a policy of preferential hiring in the Burns Lake area. Training facilities for residents will be provided prior to start-up. And Babine will employ a representative of the native people as assistant personnel officer for a period of one year after the mill opens.

The mill could employ as many as 200 people and create up to 250 jobs in secondary and spin-off industries. Burns Lake might see its local economy increase by $3 million in salaries per annum.

Retailers are concerned. They do not want to see shopping centres and other major competition move into the area as a result of the new money. One Burns Lake retailer, Don Hoffman, is excited about the challenge and thinks he has the answer to these problems: "As a citizen I feel good about the added economic input and I'm sure everyone will benefit. As a businessman I think we will have to carry larger stock with more variety, become more competitive and encourage at-home spending." Losing any of the new money is not the intention of local service and retail business.

Native people have also achieved great inroads with their own problems. Without social, cultural and practical training of substantial proportions, these people have not had the opportunities afforded the white communities. This reasoning not only applies to Burns Lake, but to most communities throughout North America.

Here, in Burns Lake, the effort has been initiated in a big way. The native people have assessed the situation and presented an organized picture of their needs to Mr. Williams. The result, 'New Dimensions' incorporates a major effort on many levels of government to help correct the native people's problems. Programs initiated here could very well be of a historic nature and a major step forward for native communities throughout Canada.

Mayor John Baker

In essence, this is what the native people have achieved through detailed negotiation with Mr. Williams.

They will participate in the activities of Babine Forest Products in a real way at every level up to and including the board of directors. They will be apportioned 8% of the chip production to sell when and where they see fit. They will have 8% ownership in the company whose major shareholders are Eurocan, Canfor and Weldwood of Canada. The native people have received a $500,000 loan from the British Columbia Government, essentially an advance against profit. This loan will be used to fund and develop subsidiary and supporting industries in the area. They will also be funded by the province for the development of community oriented programs.

In relation to the community in general, native people will have access to on the job training and counselling, to be set up by Canada Manpower and the provincial Department of Labour. Bill King, Minister of Labour, has given approval to the principal of preferential local hiring. He will give assistance to whatever training and education programs are necessary. They will range from on-the-job training for potential sawmill employees (from within the community), to courses for logging sub-contractors and instruction in the management of small business. Training programs and educational courses will be carried out locally minimizing the problem of family dislocation. A Canada Manpower office was recently opened in Burns Lake and the Department of Labour is assisting the people of the area in an extensive human resource survey. The Department of Housing, the Department of Human Resources and the Department of Municipal Affairs, are participating with the whole community in a comprehensive program of housing and development.

The Burns Lake native people have caused two entities to be incorporated. The first is Burns Lake Native Development Corporation (B.L.N.D.C.) in which all native people in the area hold shares and will act as the economic entity for the native people. B.L.N.D.C. will be the centre of all their financial transactions.

Executives and directors are: George Brown, representative of the Burns Lake local of B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians; Ted Lowley, chief of the Lake Babine Band; Durban Skin, band manager of the Omineca Band; Peter John, counsellor of the Burns Lake Band; and Abel Peters, counsellor of the Cheslatta Band.

The second entity is Burns Lake Community Development Association (B.L.C.D.A.), whose function will be to develop and work with the social and cultural aspects of the native people. With the help of the Department of Human Resources, B.L.C.D.A. will embark on a five-year program to provide development in the areas of housing, life skills, employment, recreation and community development. Through B.L.C.D.A., the native people will also have a chance to revive some of their cultural and artistic talents.

Executives and directors of B.L.C.D.A. will be: George

Don Hottman, at the door of his retail store.

George Brown, local representative of B.C.A.N.S.I. and spokesman for the Burns Lake native people.

Margaret Patrick, Band Manager of the Lake Babine Band (right), feels the new approach is long past due.

Brown, Ted Lowley, Peter John, Durban Skin, Abel Peters, Margaret Patrick, Band Manager, Lake Babine Band, and Vincent Morice of the Burns Lake local of the B.C. Association of Non-Status Indians.

Financially, the B.L.N.D.C. will receive a forgivable loan of $425,000 from the Provincial Government, to purchase their 8% interest in Babine. The province will also provide a bank guarantee of $720,000, representing 8% of the operating costs.

The B.L.N.D.C. will receive a loan from the province for $500,000 interest free for a period of five years and repayable at 3% thereafter. The loan will enable the native people to take advantage of the opportunities inherent to the development.

B.L.N.D.C. will receive grants from the province totalling $500,000. These operating funds will be used to supply self-help projects within the native community.

Native representatives realize the nature of the project and, at long last, the opportunities provided. After signing the agreements with the Provincial Government, George Brown commented, "We are optimistic that the spirit which prevailed throughout our negotiations will continue as we work together." He added, "The rest is up to us. Because of its significance to native people throughout the province and indeed throughout Canada, this unique project must succeed."

Ted Lowley, chief of the Lake Babine Band, said the project has nothing to do with the settlement of land claims but would put his people in a good position to deal with a settlement when it finally comes. "My first responsibility is to my people. I cannot allow the world to pass them by as they wait for a land claim settlement. This project is for Indian and non-Indian alike. In this area, the non-Indian needs housing, jobs and recreation to almost the same extent as the Indian. The only way to stabilize the population and workforce characteristics of the north and reduce the social problems is to make the north a more attractive place in which to live and work."

To successfully plan and administer the needs of the Burns Lake project, a number of areas are being studied. The studies include housing, schools, commerce, recreational facilities, transportation, health care facilities, industrial needs, aesthetics and these subjects are only a sample of the community's needs.

Local input plays a great part in formulating questions and answers. A community resource board will be formed with its members elected by the community. The board will hold public meetings to assess the needs and gain local opinions. B.L.N.D.C. will work closely with the Community Resource Board to make sure the community plan includes a viable future for all Burns Lake residents.

The job before various government departments, local associations, and the community-at-large, is monumental. They must assess resources and services, establish needs and priorities, draw up budgets, hire staff, locate facilities and services, to feed the current and future needs of Burns Lake.

Mayor Baker understands the magnitude of the project and the inherent problems. He hopes people of Burns Lake will live up to the challenge. "The local population must meet the impact of development. As a result, we will need some change and there are people who will resist the change. But we must learn to meet the challenge and to deal with it in a real way. There is also a unique opportunity here for the native people. They now have a chance to prove themselves and if this project works, it will mean a new way of life for native people across Canada."

Mr. Williams, upon completion of the negotiations said, "We have now completed all the extremely difficult and detailed agreements and people on all sides should be commended for their unique achievements."

Burns Lake is the first of several municipalities in the north slated to receive a tree farm licence. The application is awaiting governmental approval. Mayor Baker thinks the licence will be an interesting proposition for the village because of the control they will have over the environment in the surrounding area. One object of having a licence (which gives the licensee the right to log an area including the responsibilities of management and protection) under the direction of the village, is to create recreational facilities for the citizens. Profit will be secondary. The people of Burns Lake will have control of some of the countryside they see every day.

The British Columbia Forest Service, along with the Fish and Wildlife Branch, and other resource agencies, have the responsibility of overseeing and approving the proposals for logging. There are problems here which will necessitate tremendous co-operation between departments, Babine and the people in the area. Considerations include access road approvals, wildlife protection, effects of the development on trapping lines and hunting grounds, inventory control, and watershed protection. The list of ramifications and considerations could go on and on. The two departments have their work cut out, ensuring that industry will have as little, if any, effect on all the other users of the forests in the Burns Lake area.

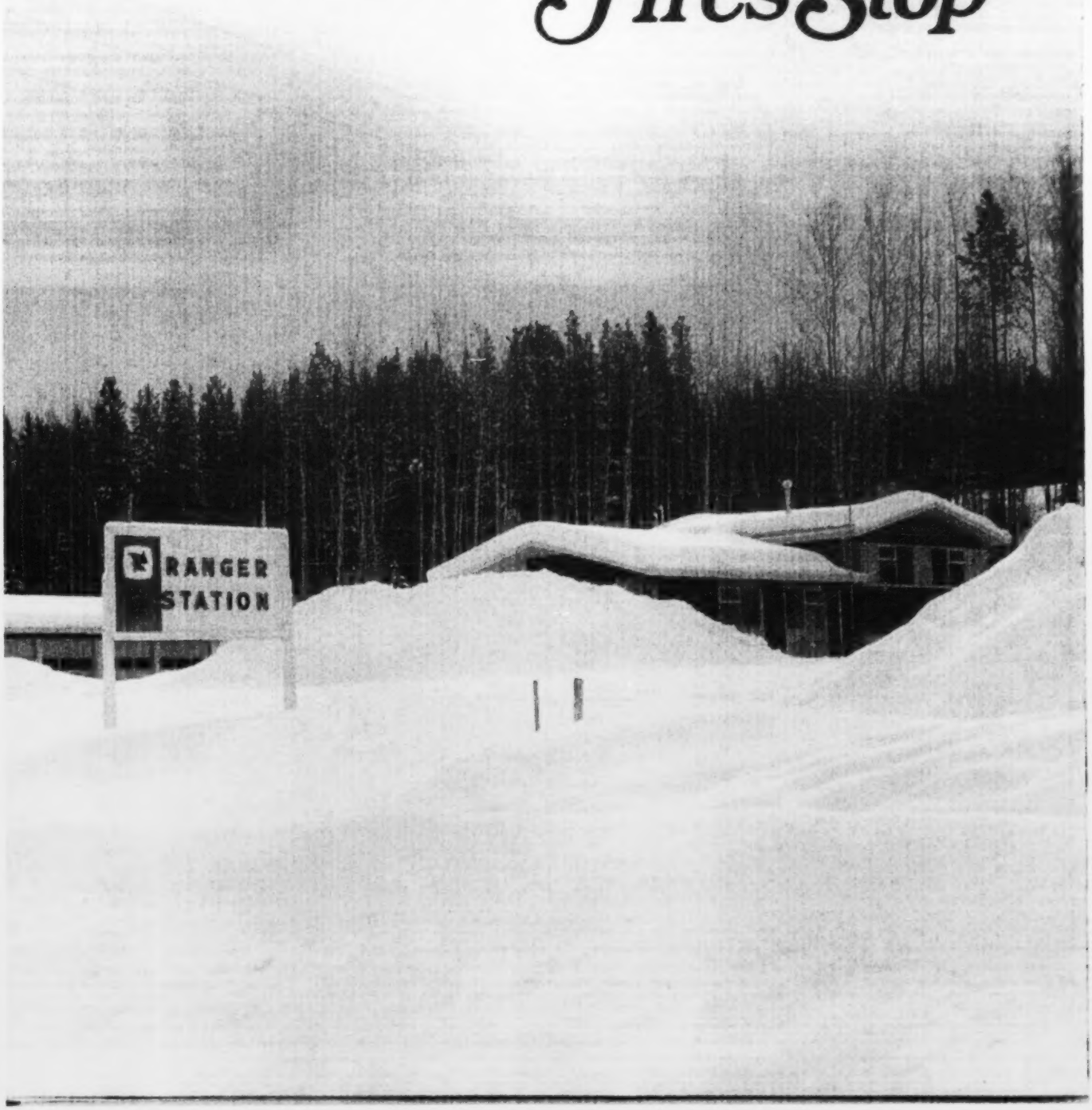
Burns Lake, in essence is just beginning. The people in this tiny British Columbia community will not see or feel the full effect of today's decisions until sometime in the future. In fact, some people in the village still haven't fully grasped the feeling of the project. In time, however, they will become involved.

Burns Lake is an area to watch, for it could very well be making history as each day passes.

"I hope some of our people will now come back to Burns Lake to help."
Lake Babine Band elder

Robert Williams, Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources and Norman Lee, Minister of Human Resources signing final agreements with representatives of the Burns Lake native people.

When the Fires Stop



by **Ray Wormald**

When there are no fires in the woods, Forest Rangers just sit around drinking black coffee, playing cards and shootin' the breeze.

True or false?

While you're pondering the question, let's visit Anthony Teindl. Tony's the Forest Ranger at Port Alberni, on the west coast of Vancouver Island, where the forest industry is the mainstay of the area's economy. His ranger district covers close to a million acres and includes towering mountain ranges carved with deep valleys, large and small lakes, and many rivers and streams. The rainfall is heavy, the climate is coastal moderate, and it's among the finest timber-growing regions in the world.

It contains practically all of the great Alberni Valley; Great Central, Sproat, Nahmint and Henderson Lakes; the Alberni Inlet to the entrance to Barkley Sound; the Franklin and Sarita Rivers; and a portion of the Nitinat Lake region. Its great mountains include Mount Arrowsmith, about 6,000 feet above sea level.

Wears Many Hats

Like every other Forest Ranger in British Columbia (there are more than 100 of them), Tony wears many hats. He's a manager of forest lands, directly involved in logging operations, a firefighter, a public relations man, a policeman, engineer, road and bridge designer and builder, office manager, resource use planner, recreation officer . . . the list goes on.

As a manager of Crown (publicly owned) land, his responsibilities include constant checks of volumes of wood being harvested, the protection of the forest against fire and disease, and reforestation matters. As a policeman he must know and enforce the Forest Act, the Anti-Litter Act, and a few others.

He must maintain steady contact with all forest resource industries within his district. And in the Port Alberni Ranger District, practically everybody is dependent — directly or indirectly — on that industry. The main tree species are Douglas fir, hemlock, balsam and cedar, and last year's timber harvest in that District totalled about 83,000,000 cubic feet. The forest resource provides employment for 1,600 loggers, and about 2,300 mill personnel.

Additional thousands of men and women work in supporting roles. Within the district are several large sawmills, a plywood plant and a huge pulp mill.

This year's fire season "wasn't all that bad" for the ranger and his staff. There were only 32 fires and the largest one covered less than four acres. Nine of them, Tony reports, were caused by lightning; the rest by industrial operations and careless campers. And although it's not in their "terms of reference", the Forest Service personnel are frequently called out to help fight private home fires.

Work For Students

The ranger station's fulltime staff numbers six — a deputy ranger, four assistant rangers, and a dispatcher. During summer months six high school or university students are hired for firefighting duties and general maintenance work throughout the district.

There are no forest recreational sites in the district yet, but it's expected at least two will be developed next year.

Another "Ball Game"

Meanwhile, back in the Northern interior of British Columbia, it's sometimes a "brand new ball game" as far as the Forest Rangers are concerned.

Take Vern Hopkins for instance. He's the ranger at Dawson Creek, about "half way up" the province and just a strong spittin' distance from the B.C. - Alberta boundary. A land of great open spaces, mountains, rivers and streams. His Ranger District covers almost five million acres . . . its eastern boundary taking in part of the great plains of the Alberta Plateau, and the balance including the rugged eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

And here forestry actually takes third place in the region's economy — with farming, and the mining of oil, gas and coal at the top of the list. Last year's forest harvest, mostly white spruce and lodgepole pine, amounted to about eight million cubic feet. Close to 400 people are employed in the logging and milling industries.

Because of weather conditions and other factors, about 85 percent of the logging is done in winter months. Summertime is farming time.

Seismic Lines

Much of Ranger Hopkins' work is devoted to land being explored and developed by various mining companies. Such firms blaze up to 6,000 miles of seismic lines a year in northeastern B.C. — such "trails" ranging from the width of a tractor blade to 33 feet, the maximum allowed by law. The Ranger staff carefully record the amount of acreage "disturbed" by such exploration work and the companies are billed for timber and other losses. The Ranger and his staff also supervise slash disposal, grass seeding and other rehabilitation projects. In most cases, because of the remoteness of the areas, trees are just left on the sides of the trails . . . often presenting fire problems.

With miles of rangeland in the district, the ranger is deeply involved in the Grazing Act, which in turn is administered by the B.C. Forest Service.

Transportation Problem

Transportation is a problem. He and his staff make constant use of aircraft, particularly helicopters. Snowshoes are often the order of a winter day.

His fulltime staff numbers eight, while students augment the staff during summer months. Seven young men and four young ladies comprised the summer help this year, and they were busy thinning trees, planting seedlings, cutting and clearing trails, fighting fires and developing wilderness campsites. There are eight such camping facilities in the district . . . the largest one being at scenic Kinuseo Falls (one of the 10 largest waterfalls in the province) about 85 map miles southwest of Dawson Creek.

Fire-wise, the summer of '74 was a light one. Only 14 forest fires which covered just over 1,000 acres.

Those forest fires are just above and beyond the usual, demanding and important day-by-day jobs these rangers have to handle.

Now about that true or false question . . .

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